(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the trials are running very late in this regard;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether there is no estimates on how much diclofenac is dispensed in the country through Government dispensaries;

(g) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(h) the steps taken to improve the situation in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. State Governments have been requested to restrict the use of Diclofenac and to reduce procuring this drug for Government Veterinary dispensaries.

(d) and (e) The experimentation about the efficacy of Meloxicam, an alternative drug to Diclofenac is at its final stages at Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar.

(f) to (h) Diclofenac is in veterinary use as a non steroid anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) and is prescribed to reduce pain, inflammation and stiffness of musculo-skeleton and are generally procured by the local veterinary authorities of the state Animal Husbandry departments. The State Governments have already been advised to restrict its use and to reduce procuring it for Government Veterinary dispensaries.

Suicides by farmers in Vidarbha

569. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that successive crop failures have resulted in 108 debt-ridden farmers suicide in Vidarbha, between June and November, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government had announced any *ex-gratia* payment for their dependents;

(d) whether the Minister will take up the issue with the Finance Ministry

to introduce a soft interest loan scheme as effective rate of interest charged on crop loans is nearly 16 per cent as compared to only 7-8 per cent for bank loans; and

(e) whether Government would initiate measures to introduce modern farming techniques to reduce the production cost for rain-fed farmers-cotton growers in Vidarbha?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Based on analysis of data on farmers suicide during the last five years, the Government of Maharashtra has conveyed the 75% of the farmers suicide in the State took place in the six districts of the Vidarbha region.

Indebtedness, poor economic conditions, social obligations involved in the marriage of daughters, illness of family members, lack of alternative source of income from occupations allied to agriculture and little value addition to agriculture produce were the major reasons for farmers committing suicide, as per studies conducted by the State Government in the Vidarbha region.

(c) The State Government had announced an *ex-gratia* payment of Rs. One lakh to the family of the farmer who committed suicide.

(d) The issue regarding lowering the rate of interest on agricultural loans has already been taken up with the Ministry of Finance.

(e) The State Government of Maharashtra has announced a comprehensive package consisting of various relief and developmental measures for implementation in the Vidarbha region, to ameliorate the lot of farmers and thereby prevent the recurrence of suicide by farmers. This package, *inter-alia,* aims to bring desirable changes in cropping pattern, encourage organic farming and reduce cost of cultivation as well as encourage value addition by supporting cooperative processing units.

The Government of India follows a multi-pronged strategy for making the agriculture sector more vibrant and dynamic. Major initiatives include enhancing institutional credit flow to the farmers and strengthening of cooperative credit structure; ensuring the timely availability of quality inputs; enhancing the sustainability of dry-land/rainfed farming system, etc.